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Work Package 2: Competencies for Early Years Learning

Emerging themes

MMU Project Activities

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OUR NEXT STEPS

Study visit to EU partner MMU 10-13/07/2017
MANCHESTER/CREWE



Why a shared understanding of competency?

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- Teacher competencies give **clarity** with a **shared language** of practice
- They facilitate **continuity** with the rest of the education system, which is beneficial for **lifelong learning** and **smooth transitions**.
- **Quality** depends on competence but significantly, the definition of quality differs not just between countries, but within countries, regions, settings and from individual to individual.
- How you identify teacher competency is greatly influenced by **cultural values** and **differing view** of the child
- If competency is clearly defined then it enables discussion throughout the **whole system** and the **community of practice** of early years workers. This is significant as the success of ECEC depends on the whole system and not just the workers.
- It enables institutions, settings, individuals and countries **to learn from each other**, which can develop an understanding of common values and diversity of approaches.

- Since 1992, **discussions** pertaining to ECEC have been a recurring pan-European policy discussion including children's rights, citizenship, and equal opportunities
- The EU benchmark is that by 2020 at least ninety-five per cent of children aged four will be in pre-school education (University of East London and University of Ghent, 2011).
- EYITE need to be able to facilitate **European and National policy and demand**, if goals are to be achieved
- **Enhanced social inclusion** is a major aim of ECEC programmes (but country priorities differ)
- Statistics on children's **educational outcomes** show that European countries are lagging behind other areas of the globe for example, **PISA**, 2015 results. This is at odds with the **EU policy goal** to become the most dynamic and knowledge based economy in the world.

Consistency

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- This will provide consistency between settings, stages and stakeholders
- There is a strong **EU preference** for a clear framework for EYITE
- Education is a **human right** so we need to know what it looks like
- **Cooperation** will benefit from the convergence of teacher education practice with the trend towards **capability** and **comparability**.
- This enables rigorous and stable **sharing of knowledge** between practitioners, settings, regions and beyond

Labour Force and Economic Growth

- Availability of ECEC is crucial for development of future **labour forces**
- 1970's **considerable growth** in the sector within Europe seemed to underscore the importance being placed on the early years profession. A significant proportion of the teachers recruited and trained in this period, are **set to retire** in the next decade
- The new teachers to replace this cohort need to be trained to high quality standards in order to buffer the trend in a mismatch with supply and demand
- ECEC is increasingly positioned as a significant sector needed for sustained **economic development** in a globalised world

Disadvantage

- A **well-qualified** and **valued workforce** are necessary to engaging disadvantaged children in ECEC. Authors have highlighted the **a lack of training in outreach skills** amongst early year's
- There needs to be an increase in **skilled** and **culturally competent** staff to have the greatest benefit for the most disadvantaged children and to facilitate **educational opportunity** and **social integration**.
- Most studies have found positive and **long-lasting effects** of attendance at high quality ECEC programmes, with the greatest benefits being for children from **disadvantaged** backgrounds
- Disadvantaged groups often have **limited access** to the high quality ECEC
- Early Years teaching, populated by a **diverse workforce** in terms of gender, race and ethnicity and age grades, is recognised as essential to support children's appreciation of gender equality and general diversity in society
- It is widely understood in the European context that ECEC should promote **social justice** which is now even more significant due to the economic and financial crisis of recent years.

Sure Start Children's Centres



In addition to developing high quality education and care for children to age five, **Sure Start Children's Centres** with education for children, provide support, health advice, and adult education, promote **interagency** collaboration, encourage family involvement in the education of young children, minimise social exclusion, and provide training for early years practitioners.

<http://jotter2.files.cache.s3.amazonaws.com/media/735/3105735.mp4>

Equality and diversity concerns

The issue of diversity is a recurring into ITE both within and between member states in the EU.

Gender

- The sector needs to attract men to meet EU policy goals on equality in the work place
- There is a lack of **attractiveness, clear incentives** and **working conditions**. Like most predominantly female professions, ECEC is underpaid and undervalued in labour markets
- In order for the labour force to be more balanced in terms of gender diversity, ECEC needs to **demonstrate high standards**
- Harmonisation of competencies can ensure a more professional **public and policy image** and recognition for skills which could guard against this highly gender divided profession
- Early years teaching has the potential to contribute to redressing longstanding differences in gender and **educational outcomes**
- Similarly, the European Union policy focus upon the importance of supporting strategies of gender equality is also visible in the need for equality of outcome for children in early and primary level years. E.g. **EYFS profile in the England**

Values

- ECEC, as with all education, has the potential to be at the forefront of instilling values that are at the core of contemporary Europe and that support community cohesion and security; these values include **human rights, democracy, equality, peace** and the fight **against discrimination**.
- Harmonising curriculum and bringing teachers together to discuss values is pivotal in developing a **shared understanding** of what it values and what it rejects in content, philosophy and practice.
- The development of a shared **professional identity** with professional peers is facilitated.

Quality

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- What it might **look like** in practice?
- Competency standards provide more **certainty** in the quality of all graduates from all teacher education programmes
- The quality of teaching is linked to the **quality of learning**.
- The **OECD** has recognised that 'Teachers matter', with the most important influence on outcomes being the quality of teaching. The high quality rhetoric of ECEC policy mimics the OECD's ***Starting Strong*** reports of 2001 and 2006. These reports acknowledge that the **developing workforce** is central to the **quality** of ECEC.

Characteristics of competencies

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- **Various models and examples** of possible change in pre-school teacher training across Europe and globally e.g. Competencies in training and in practice.
- It is useful for the construction of the term **competency** to be part of an **ongoing process**, rather than something that has or has not been achieved. **Restructuring practice** with **ongoing reflexivity** then is to be encouraged and reflected in the competencies for example the teacher as **researcher** rather than **docile**. for example **my research** of school classed of 4,5 and 6 year olds indicated passivity.
- Important **not to impose a model** but **shape a version** that works within the specific country but that is also 'future proof' for accession or other emerging changes. We have to consider the situation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in terms of current Pre-school teacher training culture, traditions and interests.

Fluidity of competencies

The efforts to define quality from the outside can be limiting. Such pressures can prevent practitioners responding to local circumstances and need whilst maximising their own peculiar skills and knowledge.

There should be an evolutionary component to EYITE competency formulation as rigid curriculum specifications **can inhibit potentiality and experimentation with a lack of innovative practice.**

This stimulates the motivation to strive for quality rather than following prescriptive competency profiles with practitioner reflexivity and dynamic local experimentalism at the forefront of practice.



Forest school

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptkID2k091I>

Our Expertise:



- Our task is to **shape** work between WP2 Team, we can share other models, give examples and advise
- Positive change in other countries, e.g. **Serbia**, TEACH project (4 Colleges of Pres-school Education– Serbia, Uni of Maribor -Slovenia, Baja University– Hungary, MMU- UK & WEBIN- Serbia)
- Our task is NOT, to tell you exactly what to do, to run WP2 without support of partners, or to dictate the direction of travel -Taking ownership of local ECEC development incites potentiality and commitment.
- **Interdisciplinary learning** – Dr Geraldine Lee Geraldine lee Tre-week is a principal lecturer in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies
- Primary, Secondary and Early Years **Initial Teacher Education** programmes Provision and EYTE
- Expertise is Quality Assuring the provision of Initial Teacher Education in early years settings -



Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

Travel to learn – return to inspire...

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Climate



Child as Constructor and co-creator compared to docile, blank slate and passive

View of staff, competent and capable

Research based practice



Open Ended

Principles guiding MMU in implementation of the project



- Participatory models
- Inclusive & embracing diversity
- Active and fun learning for change
- Building networks in a Community of Practice
- Challenging ideas, structures, hierarchies- we are not here to reinforce power structures that prevent change
- Interdisciplinary - recognising that practitioners and children need diverse skills and subjects in modern societies
- Sharing, countering inter-institutional rivalry
- We have to consider **the situation of Bosnia and Herzegovina** in terms of current Pre-school teacher training culture, traditions and interests

Some Characteristics of ECEC in the UK

- Compulsory Education the term after the child is **five**
- Historical **segregation** between **care and education** with often competing interpretations of the aim and purpose of services and differing definitions of the child
- Early years provision is increasingly addressed as an entitlement for children but child care is still largely a **fee-paying** service linked to parental employment
- You will see variety in **staffing; programme content** and implementation; **family engagement** and **support**; and **funding and financing**.

Structures of ECEC in the UK

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Early Years Unit

Pre-schools/playgroups

Special school

Private nursery schools

Nursery class

Forest School

Nursery school

Reception class

Independent schools

Before and after school club



The propriety of having very young children enrolled in formal educational settings has been an ongoing theme in ECEC discussion

Museums and Art Galleries



<http://msimanchester.org.uk/schools>

Museums and art galleries have a long history of working creatively with schools

Partnership Structure

Schools in partnership

University visiting Tutors

Partnership Tutors

Professional Mentor

Class Mentor



We will support and facilitate competency formulation with the whole team involved.

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Hvala

.....for now as we will see you in Manchester